

Mitchy, although corrupt, is not an evil-natured fellow. His curse is, as he himself remarks, his 'moral beauty*' which prevents him from exploiting the helpless situation of Nanda, whom he loves. He marries Aggie to grant the dear wish of Nanda, and, even after Aggie's betrayal of himself, he does not blame Nanda for his unhappiness. He strives sincerely to make Nanda happy, and is prepared to help her financially in collaboration with Longdon. Longdon detects the integrity and goodness of Mitchy, and through him acquires a proper understanding of Nanda. Longdon had once been a great admirer of Nanda's grand-mother, and is now a loyal well-wisher of Nanda. In a world of betrayals and hypocrisies, the loyalty of Longdon and Mitchy towards Nanda stands out in all its incandescent glory. Nanda's own resources of character, augmented by the salutary influence of Longdon and Mitchy, help her steer clear of the whirlpools of evil and corruption in her social world.

Vanderbank, despite his charm and intelligence, is too weak and dependent on the social world to renounce it. He knows the inadequacy of the social world in which he lives, but is impotent to do anything about it. In fact, he would cease to be what he is in a social world different from what it is. He will not marry Nanda because of what she knows. He has the 'hereditary prejudice' which prevents a man from marrying a girl who has lost her innocence. While Longdon and Mitchy realise that Nanda's corruption is a superficial one, Van believes her to be wholly corrupt. Nanda behaves with dignity and magnanimity towards Van. She requests him to take great care of her mother, and makes him understand that she does not blame him for his unsympathetic attitude towards her. The tragedy of Nanda, as it has rightly been pointed out by Dorothea Krook, lies in her helpless awareness of 'the corruption in her blood'. She too shares in Van's 'hereditary prejudice', which a corrupt society has injected into her blood, and for this reason cannot marry Mitchy who

does not have this prejudice. Knowing her corruption she
is yet
"helpless by her intelligence, her 'knowledge', to exorcise
this last
corruption in her blood, and helpless therefore to save
herself/"⁹ The
tragedy of human existence lies in 'the ultimate helplessness
of the
human intelligence' to save men from suffering and
destruction.
Viewed from this angle. *The Awkward Age* anticipates *The
Wings of
the Dove*. Van's pride and prejudice blind him to the moral
purity and
integrity of Nanda* and force her to withdraw from the
corrupt world
to live with Longdon- in his country-house, A
corresponding moral